

Message Text

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ACTION SMI-01

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DEPT PLEASE PASS SMITHSONIAN EYES ONLY FOR COERR AND
HIGGINS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OSCI TS

SUBJECT: PERSONNEL PROBLEMS, MEDITERRANEAN MARINE
SORTING CENTER (MMSC), TUNIS

REF: TUNIS 4790

1. REFTEL REPORTED CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOT MOFA OFFICIAL
AND EMBOFF CONCERNING FUTURE ROLE TUNISIANS WOULD LIKE TO
SEE MMSC ASSUME, WHICH AS YOU WILL RECOGNIZE CORRESPONDS
CLOSELY TO YOUR PROPOSALS. TUNISIAN "INITIATIVE",
HOWEVER, TOUCHES DIRECTLY UPON TWO PERSONNEL PROBLEMS THAT
I BELIEVE SHOULD BE FACED SOONER RATHER THAN LATER. BOTH
WERE INTRODUCED BY THE MOFA OFFICIAL DURING CONVERSATIONS
REPORTED REFTEL. THEY INVOLVE HEDIA BACCAR AND MME. KTARI.

2. RE KTARI (WHO WAS NEVER IDENTIFIED BY NAME), MOFA
OFFICIAL SAID THAT GOT WANTED DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF THE TWO CO-DIRECTORS TO BE DEFINED MORE CLEARLY DURING
PROCESS OF REVISION BASIC AGREEMENT SO AS AVOID
MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND AMBIGUITIES. HE APPEARED RECOGNIZE
THAT PERSONALITY CLASHES WERE INTERFERING WITH EFFECTIVE
OPERATION OF CENTER AND THAT BETTER DEFINITION OF WHAT
EACH CO-DIRECTOR COULD OR COULD NOT DO MIGHT IMPROVE
ADMINISTRATION. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE OFFICIAL
SAID THAT AS TUNISIANS BEGAN CONTRIBUTION TO FINANCING
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OF MMSC, GOT WANTED TUNISIANS GRADUALLY MOVE INTO

RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS AND REPLACE AMERICANS. MESSAGE SEEMS TO US CLEAR ENOUGH -- GOT WANTS TUNISIAN CO-DIRECTOR HAVE INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY WITH VIEW TOWARD EVENTUALLY TAKING OVER DIRECTION OF CENTER. IN MEANTIME GOT WANTS REDUCE POSSIBILITIES FOR CONFLICT.

3. RE BACCAR (WHO EVENTUALLY WAS IDENTIFIED BY NAME), MOFA OFFICIAL SAID THAT WHILE NEGOTIATIONS FOR REVISION OF BASIC AGREEMENT WERE IN PROGRESS, GOT HOPED STATUS QUO WOULD BE MAINTAINED UNTIL END OF THIS YEAR AND ANY PENDING DISCHARGES OF EMPLOYEES WOULD BE HELD IN ABEYANCE UNTIL THAT TIME. AFTER SOME FENCING OVER BACCAR'S CONTRACT STATUS, MOFA OFFICIAL SAID GOT FELT THAT IF TUNISIA WAS GOING PLAY GREATER ROLE IN ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING AND POLLUTION CONTROL, IT COULD NOT AFFORD TO LOSE SERVICES OF ONE OF TUNISIA'S LEADING EXPERTS. MAINTAINING STATUS QUO MEANT WITHDRAWAL OF NOTICE OF TERMINATION.

4. MEANWHILE, ACCORDING MENEZ, WHO, I UNDERSTAND HAS SO INFORMED YOU, THERE IS NOT UNEXPECTEDLY CONSIDERABLE FERMENT AMONG OTHER EMPLOYEES AT MMSC OVER BACCAR TERMINATION. THERE ARE PETITIONS IN FAVOR OF BACCAR AND NOW PROPOSED COUNTER-PETITIONS AGAINST HER. EMPLOYEES ARE ASKING WHETHER THERE WILL BE JOBS AFTER DEC 31, AND URGING THAT COERR OR HIGGINS COME TO TUNIS RIGHT AWAY TO HEAR THEM OUT. AS RESULT HIGGINS, I UNDERSTAND, HAS TOLD MENEZ TO TELL ME THAT SMI WILL "PULL OUT" BY JUNE 1975 IF PROBLEMS CAUSED BY BACCAR AND KTARI PERSIST AND IF THERE NO EVIDENCE OF GREATER COOPERATION. (I ASSUME REFTEL WILLHOWEVER INFLUENCE YOUR THINKING IN THIS REGARD).

5. SITUATION, IN MY JUDGMENT, DOES CALL FOR VISIT VERY SOON BY EITHER ONE OF YOU. WE HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH MENEZ, WHO IN DIFFICULT POSITION, AN HE TELLS US HIGGINS IS PLANNING VISIT BEGINNING SEPT 3. HE ALSO TELLS US HE BELIEVES HE CAN KEEP LID ON PERSONNEL PROBLEMS UNTIL HIGGINS ARRIVES. PERHAPS THIS SOON ENOUGH SINCE WE CAN PROBABLY STALL OFF REPLY TO MOFA UNTIL THEN AND SEPT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VISIT WOULD GIVE YOU CHANCE TO FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WISH US TO TELL MOFA IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL. THERE IS NONETHELESS REAL POSSIBLITY THAT SITUATION FROM PERSONNEL POINT OF VIEW MAY DETERIORATE TO POINT THAT IT JEOPARDIZES VERY DESIRABLE COERR PROPOSALS FOR FUTRE ROLE OF MMSC. AT PRESENT THESE PROPOSALS ARE APPARENTLY ACCEPTABLE IN GENERAL TO BOTH YOU AND GOT (AND CERTAINLY HAVE MY BLESSING). IT WOULD BE MOST REGRETTABLE IF THEY COULD NOT

BE PURSUED BECAUSE OF TRIPPING OVER THE TWO PERSONNEL PROBLEMS.

6. I SHALL THEREFORE KEEP WATCHING THE SITUATION CAREFULLY, AND IF IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT A VISIT EARLIER THAN SEPT BY EITHER OF YOU HAS BECOME IMPERATIVE, I SHALL LET YOU KNOW. ONE STEP MIGHT BE UNDERTAKEN NOW. SINCE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT JOBS AFTER DEC 31 FOR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MMSC STAFF IS AN IMPORTANT IMMEDIATE ELEMENT IN THE EQUATION, YOU MIGHT AUTHORIZE MENEZ TO INFORM STAFF THAT MMSC WILL STILL BE OPEN AND IN BUSINESS AFTER DEC 31.

7. MENEZ HAS SEEN AND CONCURS WITH THIS MESSAGE.
SEELYE

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